



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Floor Statement of Senator Max Baucus
Regarding Medicare and the House Republican Budget Plan
As prepared for delivery

Today, more than 47 million Americans rely on Medicare for their health care. For more than 45 years, seniors have had access to the affordable, dependable health care Medicare provides.

We all recognize that the cost of health care was growing rapidly. The landmark health reform law took bold steps to rein in costs, and I am eager to work with my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to further reduce health care costs, increase efficiency, and root out fraud, waste and abuse.

Last week, the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, Congressman Paul Ryan, proposed a plan that would end Medicare as we know it today. Under his plan, seniors would receive a voucher to purchase private health insurance.

Unfortunately, this voucher would fall far short of covering health care costs. According to the independent Congressional Budget Office, under the Ryan plan, "most elderly people would pay more for their health care than they would pay under the current Medicare system."

How much more?

CBO says under the Ryan plan, the average 65 year old, would have to pay \$12,000 a year to receive the same level of benefits Medicare offers today -- \$12,000. That's more than double what a senior pays under Medicare today.

Under the Ryan plan, there would be no guaranteed benefits, which are protected under Medicare today. As a result, private insurance companies would dictate what care a senior received; ending the doctor-patient partnership.

Our deficit is a serious problem that we need to address. While we need to look for more ways to reduce our deficit, we need to do so in a balanced and fair way. For starters, we shouldn't balance the budget on the backs of seniors. We will not allow Medicare to be dismantled -- not on our watch.

Yesterday, Senator Bill Nelson and I introduced a Sense of the Senate resolution stating that "Medicare should not be dismantled and turned into a voucher or premium-support program."

Deficit reduction should not simply shift costs to seniors, and that is exactly what the vouchers in the Ryan budget would do. A voucher system does nothing to lower health care costs, it does not guarantee the benefits Medicare offers today, and it does not provide access to affordable health care. Seniors deserve better.

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